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ABSTRACT

The role of the principal in a Catholic elementary/middle school has changed and expanded dramatically over the last decade. The role and tasks of principals in larger schools are essentially the same as the job descriptions of administrators in schools of less than 100 students. Principals in both large and small schools must complete reports, negotiate with state school districts, seek additional funding, write newsletters, attend school board and other parish meetings, visit potential donors, and take care of a host of other responsibilities. Some schools have created the position of executive secretary to the principal, others have hired business managers, but most have seen the need for another educator and use assistant principals. A strong advocate for seeking help for principals, the National Catholic Educational Association Department of Elementary Schools presents the stories of 19 assistant principals who attended the first assistant principals' academy. While there is great diversity in their stories, the common theme of a deep commitment to the ministry of education is evident. (DFR)

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A Day in the Life of a Catholic Elementary/Middle School Assistant Principal

Robert J. Kealey, Ed.D.
Editor

Department of Elementary Schools
National Catholic Educational Association

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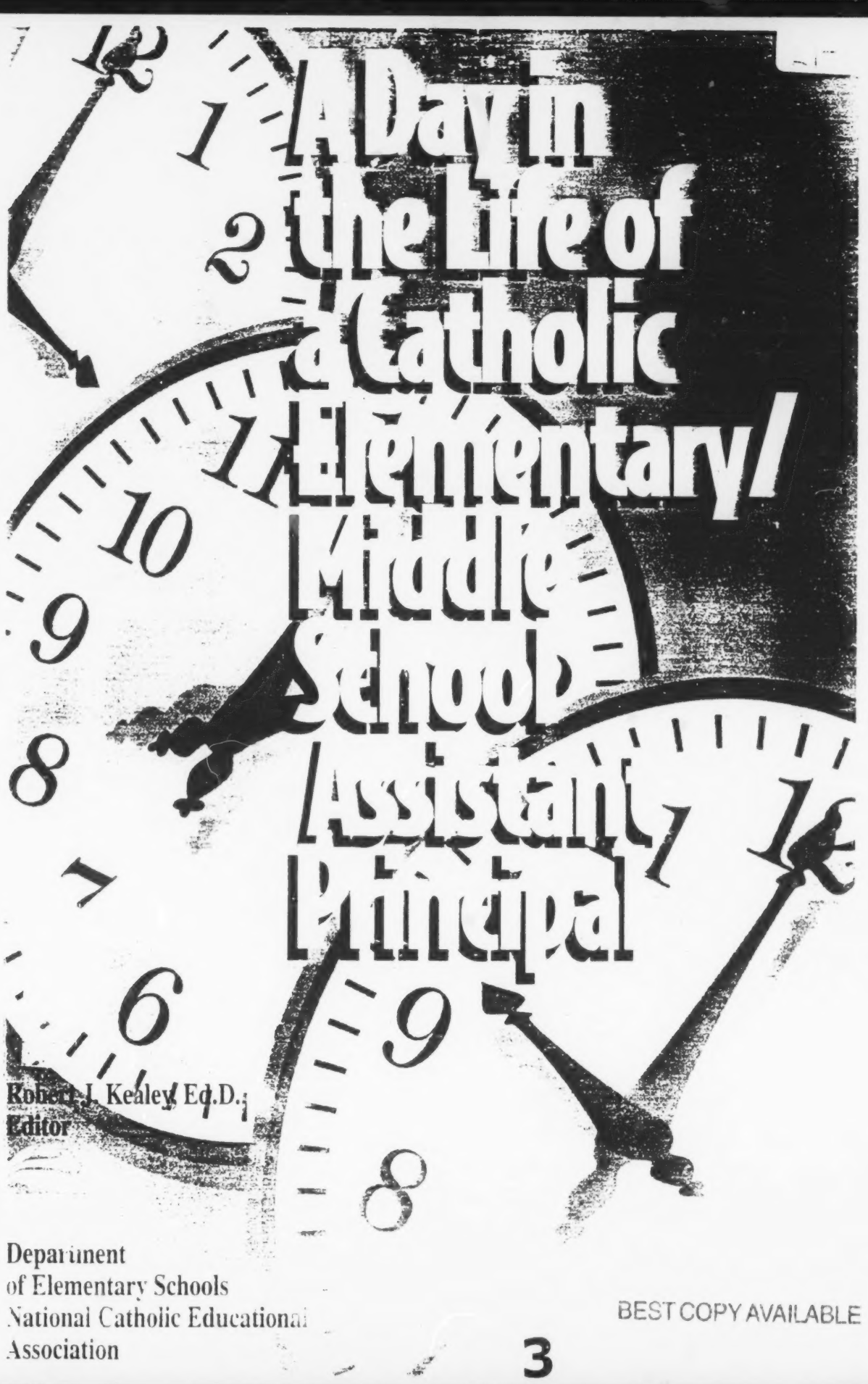

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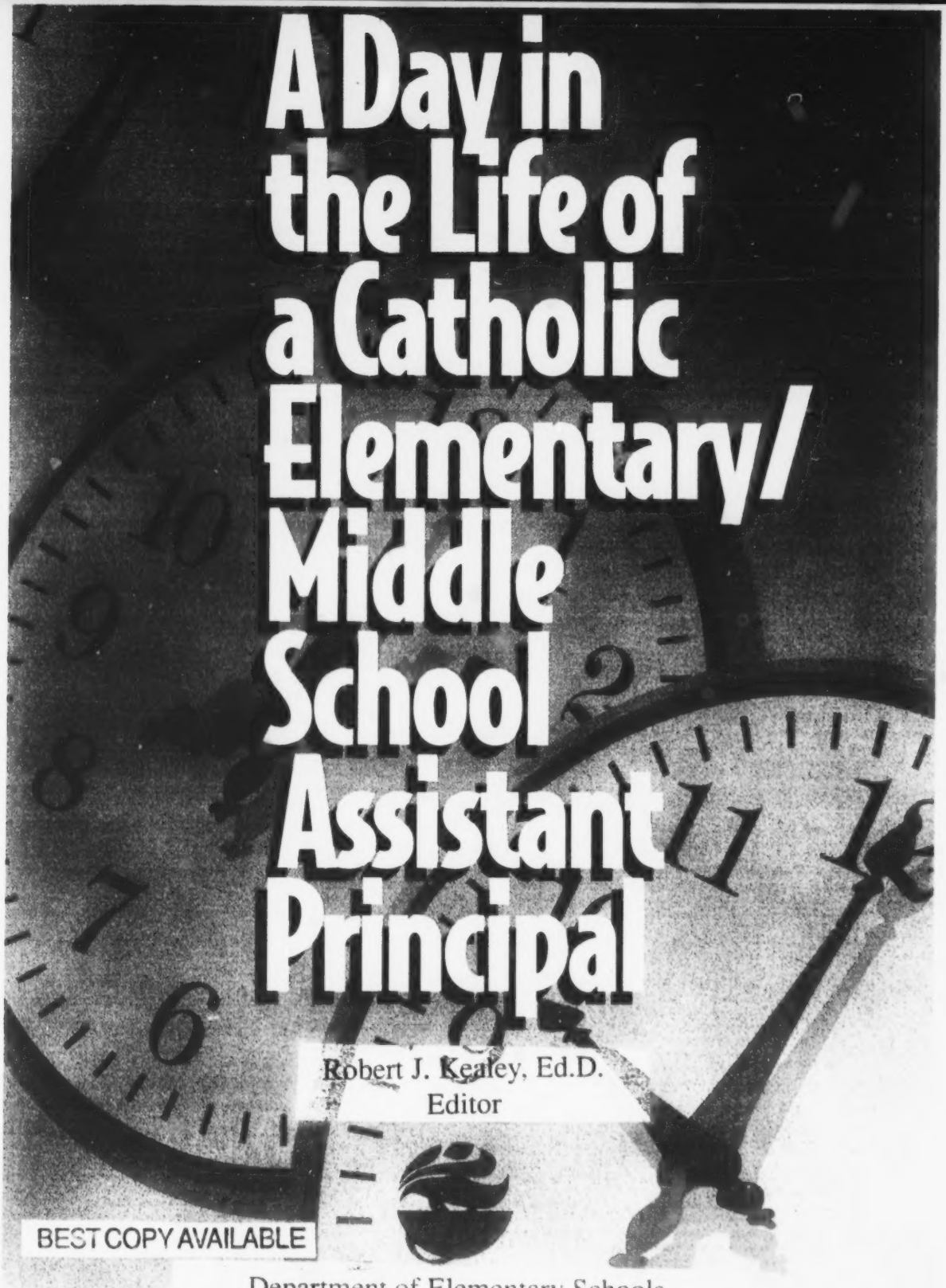

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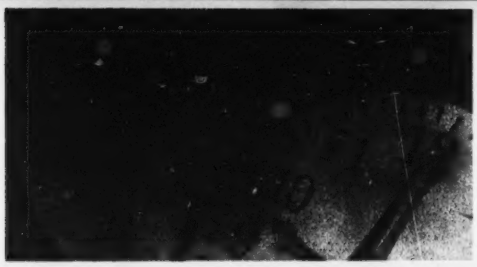

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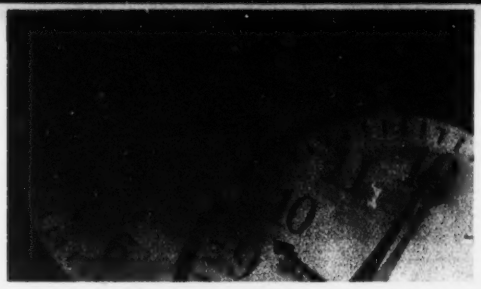


PREFACE

In July 1998, NCEA held its first National Catholic Elementary/Middle School Assistant Principals Academy. This had the generous support of CTB/McGraw Hill. The NCEA Department of Elementary Schools created this academy because it realized that these educational ministers perform a unique service for the Catholic Church and it wished to affirm and support them. Studies by NCEA indicate that only about one-third of the Catholic elementary/middle schools in the United States have assistant principals. However, this number is growing and several dioceses have stipulated that their schools should begin to plan to hire assistant principals. Of the schools with assistant principals, only about one-third of these have full-time assistant principals. The other schools have either a part-time assistant principal who teaches part of the day and serves as an administrator the other part of the day or a full-time teacher who also serves as an assistant principal.

The role of the principal in a Catholic elementary/middle school has changed and expanded dramatically over the last decade. The role and tasks of principals in schools of 800 students are basically the same as the job descriptions of administrators in schools of less than 100 students. While the princi-

pals in the larger schools have more teachers and students to supervise, principals in both large and small schools must complete reports, negotiate with state school districts, seek additional funding, write newsletters, attend school board and other parish meetings, visit potential donors, and take care of a host of other responsibilities. Additional personnel are needed to assist principals with the many new tasks expected of these administrators. Some schools have created the position of executive secretary to the principal, others have hired business managers, but most have seen the need for another educator and so secured the services of an assistant principal. The NCEA Department of Elementary Schools has been a strong advocate for seeking help for principals.

Rather than attempt to write a job description for the assistant principal, the NCEA Department of Elementary Schools believed sharing actual experiences would be more valuable for schools with assistant principals and schools considering creating this position. This book presents the stories of 19 assistant principals who attended the first assistant principals' academy. The reader will immediately notice the great diversity in their stories. At the same time, the reader will see a number of common themes. The most common of these is the deep commitment of these persons to their ministry of education and their deep love for their ministry.

The NCEA Department of Elementary Schools offers this book to its members for several reasons. It hopes that many more schools will realize the need that principals have for assistance. The department seeks to start a conversation on the role of the assistant principal. Finally, the department wishes to affirm those people currently serving in these positions and praise and thank them for their generous service to Catholic schools.

The NCEA Department of Elementary Schools thanks the many people involved in this project. First, it thanks the 19 assistant principals who so willingly shared their stories. Other people had mundane but vital tasks in bring this book to birth. Sister Ann Sciannella, SND, administrative assistant for the department, worked on the manuscripts. Angela Beckman

edited and proofread the manuscript. Tia Gray of NCEA's computer graphics department designed the cover and laid out the book.

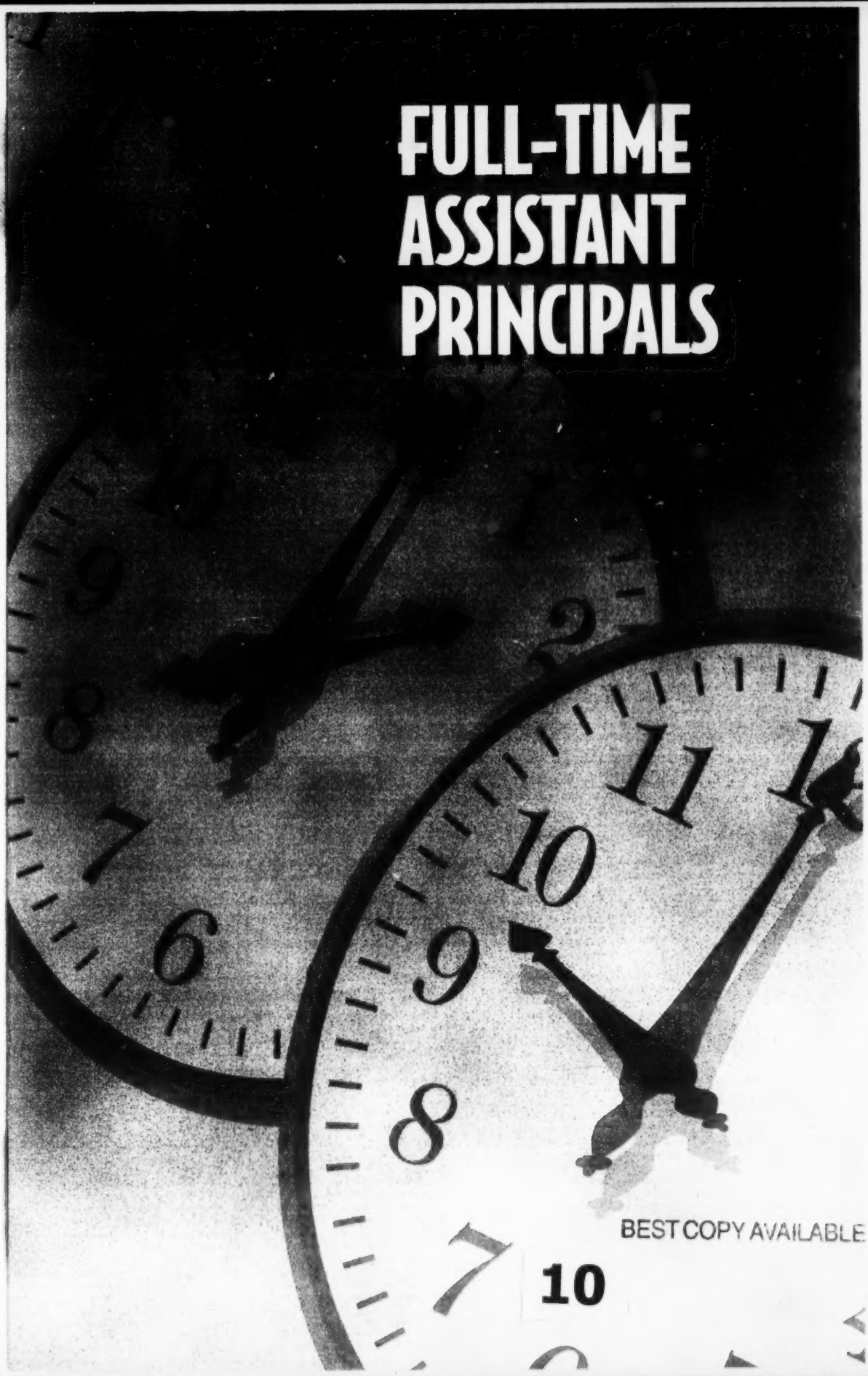
Good Shepherd Sunday 1999

James Brennan, Ed.D
President

Robert J. Kealey, Ed.D.
Executive Director

Department of Elementary Schools
National Catholic Educational Association

FULL-TIME ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS



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PATTY BRITTAIN
ST. GREGORY CATHOLIC SCHOOL, TYLER, TEXAS

GOOD MORNING, IT IS MONDAY!

7:15	Met with Chess Club.
7:50	Greeted faculty, students and parents in the hallways.
8:00	Visited Pre-K for school prayer and pledge.
8:05	Met with parent scout leader to plan service project.
8:25	Checked on substitute teacher in music class.
8:30	Met with principal to review calendar for the week.
8:45	Assembled information for teachers on East Texas Fair contests.
9:00	Visited with a parent concerned about a student.
9:20	Conducted walk-through observations in 3rd through 5th grades.
10:30	Returned phone calls.
10:45	Visited Web sites on computer regarding technology planning, checked e-mail, visited Web sites on curriculum lesson plans and projects, and worked on calendar for school's homepage.
11:30	Monitored cafeteria.

GOOD AFTERNOON!

12:00	Observed kindergarten students.
12:20	Met with TigerLink group for presentation to 2nd graders.

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12:40 Checked on substitute teacher again.

12:45 Met with City of Tyler Street Department to look at area needing fill-dirt.

1:00 Met with parish and school members of the Leadership Council.

2:00 Worked on document for Blue Ribbon School status application.

2:45 Visited with a proud first-grade student about his math work.

2:50 Met with maintenance supervisor over building repairs.

2:55 Entered hall to monitor student dismissal.

3:00 Assisted with dismissal outside.

SCHOOL IS OUT, BUT THE DAY IS NOT OVER!

3:15 Attended faculty meeting.

3:45 Met with parent volunteer to line the soccer field.

4:00 Went home and worked on Blue Ribbon School application.

GOOD NIGHT!

BURT CARLISLE
ST. CHRISTOPHER SCHOOL, METAIRIE, LOUISIANA

After seventeen years as an assistant principal, I have concluded that there is no day that can be considered typical. As soon as I try to anticipate what the day will bring, life delivers up surprises. It helps when I make a special effort to improve my organizational skills, prioritize the up-coming day's events and develop to-do lists. At least then I know what the day should bring, even though as the day unfolds, this is not what usually happens.

An assistant principal is required to wear many hats and change them often. At St. Christopher School, we have approximately 850 elementary students enrolled, so my position is full-time. While the school day officially begins at 8:45 a.m., I usually arrive between 7:15 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. This first hour can be interesting. This is when the problems that have arisen in the lives of teachers, students and their families during the previous evening begin to arrive on the school's doorstep. At this time, we schedule teacher-parent conferences, as well as curriculum, faculty and school building level committee meetings. My role shifts rapidly from administrator to conflict manager, to marriage counselor, to child psychologist, to human resources manager or to mediator.

At 8:45 a.m., the teachers and I go outside to bring in the students. At this moment it is easy to see why administrative positions are challenging. Just the sight of all the students, teach-

ers, and the parents who continue to linger is a reminder of the number of individuals an administrator must be prepared to assist. The difference in the maturity level of 4-year-olds and 14-year-olds is clearly evident. One must deal with problems that a primary school child considers to be reality and with the mood swings of adolescents.

After morning prayer and announcements, it is almost comical to watch the volume of paper that arrives at the office to be shuffled off to the different areas of the school. Papers include lunch counts, absentee lists, signed discipline forms, candy sales, cafeteria payments and many envelopes containing money with no specific destination. I put on the dual hats of banker and detective to deal with these problems.

At 9:30 a.m., if there is no special event or a mass scheduled, I set aside two hours to deal with discipline records and meet with students who are in difficulties. At any point during the day, students involved in serious disciplinary offenses receive top priority and then it is necessary to be policeman, juror, judge and, most importantly, a sensitive advisor.

At 11:45 a.m., as I walk the building I wear my maintenance chief hat and my supervisor of instruction hat. I take notes about work that needs to be done to the physical plant and visit each of the classrooms. While this may seem a strange combination, actually it is very effective. Teachers, students and maintenance needs are all viewed at the same time. It is always interesting to note that each person thinks that he or she is the only one that I have come to observe.

From noon until 1:30 p.m., the middle school students are at lunch or outside in the playground. Since there are over 400 students, the principal and I always dedicate this time to the cafeteria or the playground. The time provides a valuable opportunity to make contact with a large number of students in a short amount of time. We feel it especially is important for the middle school students to have easy access to us and at this time of day they always know where we are and can feel free to come and talk to us.

From 1:40 p.m. till 2:00 p.m., it is time for a break and some lunch which I consider a crucial part of the day. Taking a few minutes for myself provides the opportunity to relax and pre-

pare for the afternoon's events; it is a time to take all the hats off and just be myself. When assemblies, dances, pep rallies or various other activities are scheduled to begin around this time, I will make a special effort to get my break prior to the noon rush. From two to three p.m., I put on my clerical hat and enter discipline records on the database and complete other forms. This is a duty that is never finished. As soon as I think it is all done, I find more in my incoming-mail folder.

As the end of the school day arrives, I don my radio announcer hat for afternoon prayers and announcements. At 3:10 p.m., dismissal begins and with 850 students involved this is no easy task. First, we must be sure that about 300 of the students move to the cafeteria for the after-school-care program. Next, wearing my traffic patrol officer and supervisor of duty position hats, I oversee the dismissal of the rest of the students. It is usually after 4:00 p.m. before the final bus leaves with the last of the students.

I return to my office to study the calendar and see what meetings are scheduled for that evening and what is on the agenda for the next day. Evenings quickly fill up with Home & School Club meetings, band concerts, guitar concerts, sacramental programs, school board meetings and various other activities.

The completion of one day leads to anticipating what the next will bring. The importance of being flexible, keeping a sense of humor and scheduling time for oneself cannot be overemphasized when working with children. Being an assistant principal is a demanding job and the days are long, but with the wide variety of hats that one has to wear, it is never boring.

JANIS L. DORHAUER
ST. ANN SCHOOL, METAIRIE, LOUISIANA

A addressing the student body at assemblies for morning prayer, announcements, reminders, directions, accolades and reprimands; addressing parents at meetings and open house.

S sifting through correspondence and journals for new ideas, valuable articles, program and curriculum ideas.

S submitting the required forms and paper work so the school will receive state funds for technology, teacher supplies and textbooks.

I involving the faculty in decisions and informing them about meetings, changes, workshops, in-services and ideas.

S supervising teachers and students.

T typing memos, letters and thank-you notes.

A assisting the principal, director of religious education, counselor, disciplinarian, secretaries and teachers in whatever they need; acknowledging faculty birthdays and remembering them on holidays and special occasions; addressing the school's Christmas cards.

N needing time to eat lunch.

T thanking our 52 teachers for their dedication and hard work by taking one morning duty for each of them.

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P participating in student/faculty cabbageball, volleyball and basketball games and the parish-fair run; preparing the substitute teacher list.

R relieving teachers when necessary; recognizing the outstanding commitment and achievement of both teachers and students.

I implementing new ideas and programs; ensuring that all textbooks and classroom materials are ordered, received and distributed to the teachers.

N nursing wounds, sweeping floors, mopping up spills, blotting tears, calming fears, tending to bloody noses and applying ice.

C collecting and compiling forms, questionnaires, responses, opinions and suggestions; coordinating the standardized testing program, new textbook adoptions, Title II funds and the 504 program; completing state and archdiocesan reports.

I informing the faculty and students about special events and projects (e.g. principal's appreciation day), planning and implementing these activities.

P preparing the student handbook, progress report forms, school brochures, report card formats and teacher's binders, which must include school forms, committees, activity, and lunch and duty schedules.

A attending school building level committee meetings, faculty meetings, home and school club meetings, parish council meetings, school functions, athletic events, band and choir concerts, plays, retreats, first communions, confirmations, graduations, in-services, conferences, conventions and parish events.

L listening to teachers, students and parents and doing ev-

erything possible to help solve their problems, meet their needs and fulfill their requests.

MARGARET A. GEIGER
OUR LADY OF VICTORIES SCHOOL, SAYREVILLE, NEW JERSEY

I am an anomaly. At a time when for many people job satisfaction is declining, I can say without reservation or qualification that I love my job. What exactly is my job? I am an elementary school assistant principal and counselor and I have found that these two roles fit together well. There are so many aspects to my job that it is hard to write a job description. It is challenging, demanding and oftentimes exhausting, but it is never boring. A wonderful aspect of my job is that no two days are ever the same. While there are routine tasks, the human factor makes even routine chores eventful and I cannot remember ever feeling I had to drag myself to work.

Typically, my day begins when I join the principal outside the front door to greet the students. Most of them are smiling and happy, but there are a few whose facial expressions or puffy eyes reveal that the day is not beginning well for them. These children usually are my first priority of the day and for them I put on my counseling hat. I listen, sympathize and encourage these youngsters so that whatever is troubling them can be dealt with or if possible, put aside and they can enter the wonderful world of learning without burdensome distractions.

The next order of business is to begin to deal with the nu-

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merous notes and phone calls that come into the office every day. These address any number of issues and concerns, some serious and some comical. Each must be handled in a professional and sensitive manner. On any given morning there can be bus problems, late arrivals, forgotten lunches and books, parent or teacher meetings, and conferences with special education services. In addition, there are classrooms to visit, plan books to check and more than likely, a fundraiser going on that requires my attention. I also help the principal plan the agendas for faculty and parent meetings. In an effort to keep myself current, I attend workshops and serve on several diocesan committees.

An important part of my job is planning how to spend prudently the school's allocation of government funds. These funds are limited and need to be spent in ways that maximize their effectiveness for all students. This year, we have purchased much-needed science and math materials. Our school is thriving and to ensure our future success we must make every effort to keep abreast of technological advances and curriculum development. There are grants to be applied for and planning to be done. We are currently investigating a new science series that will meet state and diocesan guidelines and stress critical-thinking skills

Every day, I am called on to handle a crisis or issue that requires me to use my counseling skills. It is in this role that I am most aware of the ministering aspect of my position. I have organized a "helping-hand" program so students can refer themselves to me when they need help with a problem, without interfering with the learning process. This is perhaps the most rewarding part of my day as I am often able to see the results of my direct intervention. Assistant principals are frequently called on to handle discipline problems. Usually, the principal and I work together to foster a positive attitude toward discipline. We emphasize responsibility and consequences rather than punishment, which has contributed to the very positive attitude at our school.

I could not have the job I have nor find it so personally rewarding if it were not for the professional generosity of my

principal. She is a patient mentor and willing teacher of sound administrative practices. She leads and guides in ways that build confidence in all the staff. It is a privilege to work for her.

SUSAN HALL
BLESSED SACRAMENT SCHOOL, SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

I try to start my day around 7:00 a.m. At this time, I often do my maintenance check of the facilities, pay bills and balance the checkbook for the Pre-K, or just catch up on items left over from the day before. I am also available to parents, students and teachers, since the principal is teaching a corrective reading class. At 7:45 a.m., I go to the gym to supervise arrival and for prayers and announcements. Students and teachers then go to their homerooms. The day has officially begun.

My next job is to check in with the principal to compare schedules for the day and the coming week. On most days, we have separate agendas. The principal may assign me a special project that could be anything from checking health records, to working on an advertising brochure for the school, to doing an informational observation and evaluation of a particular teacher. The principal and I collaborate on many issues, including the school budget, curriculum evaluations, strategic planning and staff development. We also work together on all federal programs, such as the federal lunch program and Titles I, II and IV. I am very fortunate that we have a good working relationship and that she is very supportive of me.

I attend various meetings with the principal and sometimes in her place. I am a non-voting member of the school board

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and attend those meetings, as well as various committee meetings. Unless there is the possibility of expulsion, I will handle all disciplinary matters on my own and conduct a discipline committee meeting with the student, his or her parents and the homeroom teacher. We decide on what action to take, which could range from a reprimand to being suspended or anything in-between.

I am responsible for ordering and distributing instructional supplies and textbooks. While this is especially time-consuming at the beginning and end of the school year, it seems that throughout the year someone always needs something. During the day, I attend to student health needs and administer medications. I try to monitor students who are on regular medication so I can be helpful if an assessment of that student is requested. I also check the students' health records and notify parents of any missing information.

I had never expected to be a financial consultant but my responsibility for the Pre-K program has led me into this role. I maintain the records for this state-funded program that is supported by lottery monies. There is a lot to be done around the 15th and last day of each month, as well as when the quarterly tax forms are due—I actually find W2s fun!

Another job I never thought I would have is that of editor, but this has evolved out of my being responsible for the school's monthly newsletter that takes up much of my time at the end of each month. While others contribute articles, I sometimes have to become quite creative to fill in any gaps and fit the pages together. At the beginning of the year, I work closely with our substitute teachers and provide them with an orientation. Finding and keeping substitutes could be a full-time job by itself.

There is the catch-all phrase in my job description that states that I will perform "other duties as assigned." Boy, do I! These "other duties" alone could fill another book. But no matter what the title or job description, my job is to be with the kids and to be there for them. Regardless of what I may have to do on any given day, I take time for "wandering with a purpose." I like to see what's going on, where, and with whom. Sometimes I will find myself involved in activities with the students – lis-

tening to their stories at the lunch table, helping with a puzzle or a math problem, or even playing quarterback in a game of football. To me, this is what it is all about.

MARY KOLBECK
HOLY FAMILY SCHOOL, SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

I have been the full-time assistant principal at Holy Family Educational Center in San Jose, California, for one year. Our school has an enrollment of 650 students from pre-K through eighth grade. When I arrived at Holy Family, the job description for my position was already in place. The job includes many tasks—some occur only once during the year, while others need to be done on a daily or weekly basis. One thing is for sure—I never know what my day will bring, especially if the principal is off campus! I am fortunate that I work with great people in the school office who help me through each day and are truly my best friends.

As assistant principal, I do the following things during the school year. I meet with the principal on a formal and informal basis to discuss upcoming events, solve current problems, help in the area of discipline and make new plans. I will also act as a consultant when needed. With disciplinary matters, I am usually the first person the students see for a behavior problem. I keep the principal informed of all actions taken and follow up when needed. Included in my responsibilities are mentoring teachers, substitute teaching, hiring new teachers, conducting fire drills and supervising yard duty. I also coordinate the Catholic Television Program and the Chapter 2 categorical program, and assist with the disaster-preparedness program.

In April, I begin the process of ordering books for our more than 20 classrooms. When the books arrive, I stamp, count

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and distribute them and get all purchase orders ready for payment. If books are lost or damaged during the year, it is my responsibility to collect payment for them, reorder and then distribute the replacement books. At mid year, the eighth-grade teachers give me clear and helpful directions so I can assist them with the applications for the local Catholic high school. I had never realized what a time-consuming process this is.

This past year, I served as the school curriculum coordinator for the Diocese of San Jose. I attended three to four meetings during the year and was able to bring information back to the faculty that has helped them to move forward with their own planning. I also serve as the administration representative to the Parent Teacher Group (PTG). This group holds board meetings once a month and three to four general meetings a year. Along with the principal and the religion coordinator, I will also attend the bi-weekly parish staff meetings.

Yes, there are other things that come up—often unexpectedly—but I just take a deep breath and smile! When I became a full-time assistant principal I thought I would miss the daily classroom activities and making contact with individual students. What I have learned is that as assistant principal I can touch many lives—in the playground, in the classroom and in the office. I feel very fortunate to be a part of the Catholic education system.

RICHARD A. Le LEBLANC
BLESSED TRINITY SCHOOL, OCALA, FLORIDA

My average day goes like this.

MORNING

5:30 Rise, shine, shower, shave, dress and eat breakfast.

6:00 Drive the 25 miles to school.

6:30 Arrive at school, check mailbox, e-mail, and go over notes for the day.

7:00 Unlock the bathrooms, check all middle school classrooms and leave reminders.

7:20 Check the primary grade students in morning care; supervise the middle school students.

7:50 Touch base with all middle school personnel, homeroom time.

8:00 Supervise the halls for passing time and check on behavior in the physical education classes.

8:20 Meet with guidance counselor.

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8:45 Attend middle school staff meeting for teachers of grades 6, 7 and 8.

9:30 Supervise halls for passing time and check behavior in 6th grade classrooms.

10:00 Attend administrative team meeting with the principal, guidance counselor and secretary.

11:00 Supervise halls for passing time and check on behavior in seventh-grade classrooms. Check mailbox.

11:20 Eat lunch, return phone calls, type detention list and meet with students.

AFTERNOON

12:00 Supervise lunch for fourth and fifth-grade students.

12:35 Supervise lunch for sixth, seventh and eighth-grade students.

1:05 Supervise halls for passing time and check on behavior in eighth-grade classrooms.

1:30 Meet with and notify students for detention hall.

1:45 Supervise halls for passing time. Check restrooms, mailbox and e-mail.

2:10 Touch base with the principal.

2:40 Supervise front dismissal of students, car duty.

3:15 Relieve teacher covering detention hall.

4:00 Complete to-do list, update discipline database and fill out purchase orders.

4:30 Supervise gym for basketball and volleyball competitions.

EVENING

6:30 Grab some dinner at Burger King and call home to check on wife and children.

7:00 Attend the school board meeting.

9:00 Check that all doors are locked in the middle school.

9:15 Drive the 25 miles home.

10:00 Watch the evening news.

10:30 Type any needed announcements, check e-mail and read for pleasure.

11:15 Go to sleep!

ANOTHER DAY

5:30 Get up and start all over again.

EILEEN MASTERS
ST. PIUS REGIONAL SCHOOL, BOWIE, MARYLAND

Happily, a day in the life of an assistant principal is both active and interactive. My days are always busy, sometimes challenging and seldom predictable. Most of the time they go something like this.

7:30 a.m. The day begins with routine chores, including turning on copying machines, making coffee, unlocking doors, turning on lights and ensuring all teachers are in the classrooms. If they are not, then I am frantically calling substitutes.

8:10 a.m. As the bell rings loudly, 650 students stand silently in the playground waiting to pledge allegiance to the flag. Following general announcements and prayers, students and teachers respond with, "Let us remember we are in the presence of God!"

8:30 a.m. My attention turns to a meeting with the parents of a child who is teased by other children in his class. I assure the parents that the situation will be looked into, the teacher informed so we can gather more facts, and that all involved will look after their son. When the parents are more relaxed the meeting ends. Any suggestions and thoughts for solving the problem go directly to the teachers involved.

On Monday mornings, I set aside time to review the teachers'

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plan books. I also will spend a few minutes in each classroom to get a feel for the class atmosphere. If students and teacher are working in an organized, happy way, I know the day is probably going to be a good one for them. If things are not going well, I might stay for a while to offer suggestions and try to help improve the class atmosphere. Sometimes just my being there helps, as will another visit later in the day.

9:00 a.m. Hopefully, I will now have a little time to return telephone calls, meet with the secretaries and discuss the day's plans with the principal, before the onslaught of discipline problems are sent to the office. These problems will take up most of my day and can be as simple as a lost pencil or as serious as the dying of a grandparent. I draw on my listening skills, empathy and experience to help me choose the best way to deal with each problem. Good discipline practices require creativity and an open mind.

Often children are sent in for a minor problem. Once I have time to elicit more information, I find that a more complex life problem—the death of a family member, divorce or severe illness of a sibling—is the root cause of the infraction. At other times, the underlying cause is humorous, as it was when a little girl in the first grade was sent to the office for the serious offense of biting another child in the playground. Investigation revealed that she was imitating her new puppy!

I try to instill in the children our purpose and our mission as a Catholic school. Many times I feel we really do reach our students. I received the following letter from an eighth grader who had been in a fight with another student.

> *I should not have gotten involved with ___ today at school. I should have just left him alone. If I had left him alone, I would not have missed computers. I would not have gotten in trouble in school. I would not have gotten in trouble at home, I would not have an in-school suspension, I would not have you and other teachers (or faculty members) disappointed in me and I would not have to write this essay. By doing this action, I caused my parents, teachers, and most importantly, God to be disappointed with me. The main reason I did what*

I did is because sometimes ___ makes fun of me or my mom or my friends, and picks fights, but even so, I still should have just left him alone. Next time my friends and I feel like doing something like this, we should think twice about what we want to do. I will not do this again because it is wrong, and it will get me into trouble again. In this essay I would like to ask for forgiveness from you and other teachers, and especially from ___. You were right, if I keep acting like this, I will end up in jail, or in a gang doing bad things, and hurting innocent people. I should listen to you now before it is too late. I do not want to end up like one of the people whom you see on the news or in a newspaper doing wrong things or even worse, I could end up dead doing these kinds of things. I do not always understand things that adults say but, as I get older, I will. I would like to thank you for watching out for me even if you get frustrated. Thank you for caring.

A sixth grader wrote about a video he made with some friends.

I made a video for science explaining lights and sound for a school project. In one part of it, we made fun of _____. I am sorry and I will never do it again. I said I couldn't do anything about it, but inside I really know that I could have told someone.

Often we get notes from family members. One wrote to us saying, "Dear Teachers, All of James' shoes are wet because of the rain, even his dress shoes. Thank you for your patience." And even teachers get worn out at times, as one wrote to me: "Help! Mark, Jay and Bryan really need a 'don't goof off at mass' talk. I don't think they got the picture from what I said."

As a disciplinary procedure we will have a child write about what happened and what he/she could do differently next time. This helps them understand the consequences of their actions. One junior high student wrote,

Yesterday I made a dumb mistake. I took a squirt gun and shot one of my fellow classmates. I thought it was going to be so funny. I thought that everybody was going to get a big kick out of it and that it wasn't going

to be a big deal. I thought that I wasn't going to get caught. Boy, was I wrong. Because of my stupid, immature and inappropriate behavior, I got the teachers mad at me, the principal mad at me, some of my classmates mad at me, and I lied about it and got myself suspended.

A good part of the day is taken up arranging schedules for confessions and counseling, and for practicing liturgies with the children. I also arrange, with parents, the lighter aspects of the school programs, such as assemblies, pizza day, the fun fair and the Christmas bazaar, in order to add varied and cultural experiences to the lives of our students.

Our school's mission statement encourages students to find opportunities to be of service to others. I will spend part of my time overseeing community outreach programs to provide assistance to the needy, people in prisons and orphanages. I will also spend part of my day being an advocate for the school at the local, state and federal levels in order to obtain the best services and opportunities for our students.

2:45 p.m. Dismissal time. Since the principal is at a meeting today (hence I took no lunch break), the teachers and I will attempt to get 650 children safely into some 500 cars and then call the 20 or so parents who forgot or were delayed.

Usually I leave at about 4:00 p.m., feeling energetic. Today, however, there is a faculty meeting and a home and school meeting. At the faculty meeting, I represent the administration's viewpoint as we discuss the day-to-day problems of teachers, students, maintenance personnel and staff. After this meeting, I get myself something to eat and prepare for the home and school meeting. Finally, I get to go home, somewhat tired since it is later than usual. Still, tired or energetic when I leave, I end each day thanking God for my job and grateful that I have had the chance to interact with the principal, teachers, staff, students, parents and volunteers. I learn more than I teach and receive so much more than I give. I would not want my life to be any other way. I would like to share the presentation made in honor of my principal because it provides a description of the nature of the relationship between a principal and her assistant.

So much of the present is made up of the past. I have to speak a little about the past in order to get to this present moment. I have always been in education and loved it. I was at my former school for 15 years and came to St. Pius thinking it would be a change and a challenge. Driving to the school that first day in August, I wondered where to make the left-hand turn from Route 197 to get to Bowie, and I wondered if I had made the right decision. I did not have to wonder for long. As I was getting out of my car, Shirley [the principal] pulled up in her car, got out and greeted me warmly with a hug.

From that first day on, I have had many opportunities to learn from Shirley. I think most people in education dream of being at a school where academics are the priority. Often, this does not happen because people get caught up in the latest fads and in pleasing the students. Not at St. Pius. From the moment Shirley greets the students at the front door, the atmosphere is one of learning and it stays that way for the rest of the day. Thank you, Shirley. . . . The most important thing I have learned from Shirley is to be aware of the spiritual aspects in everything I do. In dealing with teachers and students, Shirley always looks beneath the surface into the soul. What more could one ask for? Thank you, Shirley.

Assistant Principal Job Description

The following is the school's list of assistant principal responsibilities:

- Assume principal's duties in his/her absence.
- Discipline students.
- Observe teachers and compose evaluations.
- Attend teacher and parent conferences.
- Arrange for and assist at faculty meetings.
- Advise Catholic Schools Office of faculty meetings and schedules.
- Attend monthly school board meetings.
- Attend grade-level meetings and observe science meetings.
- Arrange hall schedule with rectory.
- Arrange assemblies.

- Prepare schedules for counseling, confessions, reconciliations for grades 3-8, school and class liturgies, pizza day and other events.
- Assist with confessions.
- Obtain names of needy school and community families to receive Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets.
- Prepare weekly and monthly faculty calendars and monthly parent calendar.
- Prepare summer reading list for grades 2 through 7.
- Prepare Bowie wish list.
- Prepare Middle States evaluation.
- Write Bowie educational grants and prepare combined federal campaign grant.
- Assist representatives of the Federation of Maryland Catholic Schools.
- Assist in finding students for the Prince George's County Youth Advisory Council.

GERI MORRISON
ST. PIUS X SCHOOL, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

The first thought that comes to mind when asked about the job of assistant principal is "Jack of all trades." I enjoy the differences each day brings and feel that during the course of an average day, I take care of everything and everyone at St. Pius. If there is a job to be done—sweep the floor, clean up, sort mail, distribute books to the right person—I want to do it. I come in each day prepared to handle my responsibilities. The night before, I have completed my homework of drafting memos, answering calls and if needed, going to a meeting and taking notes. Most mornings bring a crisis that needs immediate attention. These crises can include finding a substitute teacher, covering a class for a teacher who is not in or is late, having an unscheduled conference with a parent, or comforting a child.

I am fortunate to have a good working relationship with my principal. She treats me as an equal, which makes all the difference when it comes to working together for the good of the school community. We are able to collaborate well in handling various situations because of our relationship and the good rapport we have established with parents, faculty, staff and students. It makes me proud that the principal considers me an important part of the administrative team.

I began my career at St. Pius X as a first-grade teacher and for five years directed my talents solely to the classroom. In

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1989, the Archdiocese of Baltimore was encouraging principals to seek out assistants and my principal asked me to attend a meeting for assistant principals. St. Pius X was one of 12 elementary schools that sent representatives to the meeting. For the next few years, I was both assistant principal and a first-grade teacher. I took on the extra duties at first without any extra time being available and without a stipend.

I put an extra desk in the back of my room where I could handle discipline problems that were sent to me by other teachers, while I continued to teach my own class. Through creative scheduling, I was able gradually to have a block of time for my assistant principal work, and a small stipend was added to my teacher salary to cover the added duties. In 1996, I taught in the morning and did my assistant principal duties in the afternoon. Even that did not give me enough time and I was bringing a lot of work home every night. Both the principal and my husband encouraged me to think seriously about being a full-time assistant principal. I took the position.

I am extremely happy as a full-time assistant principal and director of admissions. Of course I thought that not teaching would give me a lot of extra time, but that never seems to be the case. Among my responsibilities are overseeing the curriculum and the teachers for Pre-K through third grade, coordinating college field experience and student teachers, assisting with parent, teacher and student conferences, and preparing class and teacher schedules.

I have been fortunate to serve on several committees for the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Since 1989, the assistant principals have formed a strong group, increasing in size annually. There are now at least 50 elementary school assistant principals. The group meets three times a year, under the leadership of Dr. Ronald Valenti, to share information about our jobs. I was pleased to serve as chairperson of a committee that created an evaluation instrument for assistant principals, and also to serve on the original handbook committee for the Archdiocese.

I have a strong commitment to Catholic education. I believe that we have a dedicated community working to strengthen the values and morals of our students. The parents are paying

for their children to learn academic skills as well as social skills and the Catholic school system does an excellent job of meeting both these goals.

KAREN MUCKRIDGE
IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY SCHOOL, HIGH POINT, NC

I know the duties of an assistant principal...

The sound of my phone ringing at 6:00 a.m. with a sick teacher on the other end telling me she will not be in; the children asking questions about the day during the homeroom period; listening to parents' concern about their childrens' work; and lending a sympathetic ear for teachers who have had a bad day.

I know the duties of an assistant principal...

Organizing agendas for faculty meetings, conducting new teacher evaluations, and setting up innovative learning programs for the school.

I know the duties of an assistant principal...

The pleasure of sharing with a first grader his or her first reading experience; teaching the eighth graders how to be leaders; being a liaison between _____ and _____ for my fellow teachers; and simple enjoying the connection between _____ and _____ [both worlds].

I know the duties of an assistant principal...

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ANGELA NAPLES
THE DONNELLAN SCHOOL, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

This is the first year that the Archbishop Thomas A. Donnellan School has employed a full-time assistant principal. My one-year contract began in July 1998. I spent the summer working on textbook orders, class schedules and the computer curriculum of the 1998-1999 school year.

The technology coordinator and I put in many hours developing a plan to integrate technology into the classrooms. We now have three networked computers in each classroom and are purchasing software that will complement the skills being taught in the various subject areas. In addition, we have scheduled in-service times for teachers in specific grade levels, in order to provide hands-on training and previewing of software. During the school year, I collect lesson-plan books on Monday and Tuesdays. This helps me keep up with what is being taught in the classroom and is beneficial information to have when looking for Internet support and software.

Preplanning week, just prior to the beginning of school, involved 10- to 12-hour days assisting the principal with department meetings, new teacher orientations, last minutes orders of supplies and textbooks and helping the teachers with classroom and curriculum needs. Considerable time is spent on instruction in classroom management and discipline procedures, particularly for the new teachers.

During the school year, my workday begins at 7:30 a.m.

We are not required to be at work till 7:45 a.m., but coming in early enables many teachers to miss the infamous Atlanta rush-hour traffic and it allows time to socialize before the students arrive. At 7:45 a.m., I am on car pool duty on the north side of the building, where I monitor the middle-school students. We then begin the day with prayer, the pledge of allegiance and morning announcements given over the intercom system.

Despite my efforts, the reality is that we have a shortage of supplies and textbooks and I find myself spending valuable time on the phone dealing with back-orders, wrong orders and in one case, no order at all due to a company buy-out. While I try to track down our supplies, the teachers and students make the best of the situation.

Throughout the school day, I visit the classrooms to see how things are going. This gives me an opportunity to get to know the students and get a feel for the instructional style of the teacher. A few weeks into the semester, I will begin formal observations so I can provide feedback and support to the teachers.

At about 11:45 a.m., I will breeze through the cafeteria to check that the lunch line is moving and go outside to survey activity in the playground. After a quick bite of lunch (and I do mean quick), I try to go to my office to answer messages and return phone calls. However, with the many detours I take along the way, when I do get there, it is dismissal time and I go back outside to oversee the car-pool line.

With the students headed home, I do get to my desk and manage to make some phone calls and deal with some requests. The phone stops ringing around 4:00 p.m. and I am able to have some uninterrupted time. At 5:30, I head home, shower, dress and dash back to school for Information Night. This has been one of my better days. Tomorrow's duties will be totally different.

SUE SNYDER
OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP SCHOOL, SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA

6:30 a.m. Arrive at school and punch in code to disarm the alarm. Bells ring and horns blare. The powers-that-be have changed the code without telling the office staff, once again! Got my adrenaline pumping.

7:00 a.m. Listen to message on voice mail from teacher who has car trouble and will be late. Open classroom and arrange to take her class until she arrives.

7:15 a.m. Greet school principal and arrange to go over some issues later in day. Greet teachers as they arrive and answer questions about field trips, book orders and some students who are struggling. Refer several teachers to principal, as issues are outside my area of responsibility.

8:15 a.m. Go to classroom of teacher who has car trouble, greet students, hear morning prayers and special intentions. Realize again how much I enjoy being in the classroom; am almost glad teacher is late.

9:00 a.m. In the middle of a great discussion on Catholic identity, the teacher arrives and takes over the class. I head back to the office where two students who are upset about an overflowing toilet in the boys' bathroom meet me. It is the same toilet that overflows at least once a week. Kids are impressed that I fix it with a strong kick to the handle … a col-

lege education for this?

9:30 a.m. Return voice mail messages. Set up meeting with a parent and teacher that I will mediate if need be. since both are very upset. Seems to be a real lack of communication. Work on letter to all parents informing them about the upcoming Discipline with Purpose seminar.

11:15 a.m. Do junior high lunch duty, which is a good time to talk with students and get a feel for the climate and problems in junior high. I must be sure to keep an eye on the boy's restroom for the upper grades, as there has been some vandalism there that we think occurs during the lunch hour. Sure enough, I catch four boys putting wads of paper towels down the toilets to jam them. This sure is my day for toilets! The boys are amazed when I give them latex gloves and tell them to clean out the toilets. I meet with each boy individually in my office to complete a discipline referral and call the parents. Together the boys come up with a consequence: they will meet me at 7:30 a.m. every day for a week to clean the restrooms. I speak to them about responsibility and consideration for others and think I have reached three out of the four boys. I am worried about the fourth and will try to meet with him more often as he seems like a lost soul. I go back out to lunch duty. Usually, the principal and I split duty but she has a meeting today. Intermediate and primary lunch times are uneventful except for lost lunches, spilled drinks and skinned knees.

12:45 p.m. Lunchtime is over for the students which means it is time for me to have lunch and meet with the principal. This is a good time for us to touch base each day. Even though we were interrupted several times we were able to get some decisions made. After lunch I work on the NCA report on our progress meeting and their recommendations.

2:45 p.m. Dismissal time. Oversee car dismissal.

3:15 p.m. Meet with parents and teacher to help work

out perceived problem. It turned out that miscommunication was the main problem and the parents and the teacher all seemed happy by the end of the meeting.

4:00 p.m. Leave for home. I have to come back later for an Advisory Board meeting at 7:00 p.m., but I feel a great need to touch base with my family. At this time of year I always worry that I am neglecting them.

11:00 p.m. Home from meeting which went well but long. Before drifting off to sleep, I go over the mishmash of my day and decide that I would be bored with a predictable, regimented day. In time, I hope I will learn how to balance family, school and my needs because I do love this job. I believe in this job. I want to be very good at what I do and I want to make a difference.

SISTER ANN RAYMOND WOOD, SSJ
ST. CHARLES BORROMEO SCHOOL, ORLANDO, FLORIDA

For me, as assistant principal at a large elementary school with 650 students Pre-K through eighth grade, no two days are ever the same. Though my responsibilities may vary from day-to-day, my ministry is always the same: assist the principal, affirm the teachers and students and support the school's mission.

Throughout the school year I have ongoing responsibility for checking lesson plans, for assisting with the orientation of new teachers, for formal and informal teacher evaluations, and for maintaining the staff's personnel files. I am an ex-officio member of the school board committee and attend the monthly meetings. As needed, I will stand in for the principal at the weekly parish staff meetings.

I circulate throughout the campus during the course of the day to ensure that all is well. If there are any disciplinary problems in Pre-K through 4th grade, I will usually handle the situation.

It is my privilege to prepare student lectors for our school liturgies and to help coordinate these special celebrations. I also enjoy preparing cards and flowers to celebrate staff birthdays. At St. Charles, we make use of every opportunity to encourage everyone in the school community.

I offer my gifts and talents to assist in whatever way I can in the implementation of our school's mission and philosophy.

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CHERI LYNN WOOD
ST. EDWARD SCHOOL, DANA POINT, CALIFORNIA

As assistant principal, my day begins with bright-faced students lined up to greet me politely. Sometimes they will hide out of concern that I am going to measure the length of their skirts or check to see if their shirts are tucked in. Once the students are in the classrooms, a few parents may come to me with their concerns and the office will request me to excuse some morning tardiness. Next, I may attend a planning meeting with one of the commissions that make up the organizational structure of the school or the parish, or be free to turn to one of the projects that sits on my desk. The projects could include some of the ones mentioned below.

- rewriting the school handbook
- creating a curriculum brochure
- working on the Internet student user agreement
- deciding on the administrative software for the school
- writing a grant to fund an inclusion program
- preparing the faculty meeting agenda
- investigation new textbooks for grades K-8 religion
- compiling the faculty and parents surveys
- designing an in-service for the faculty for standardized testing
- eating my lunch

While there are many components to my position, I do find time to spend with the students, which is the most rewarding and important part of my day. Occasionally, I have the plea-

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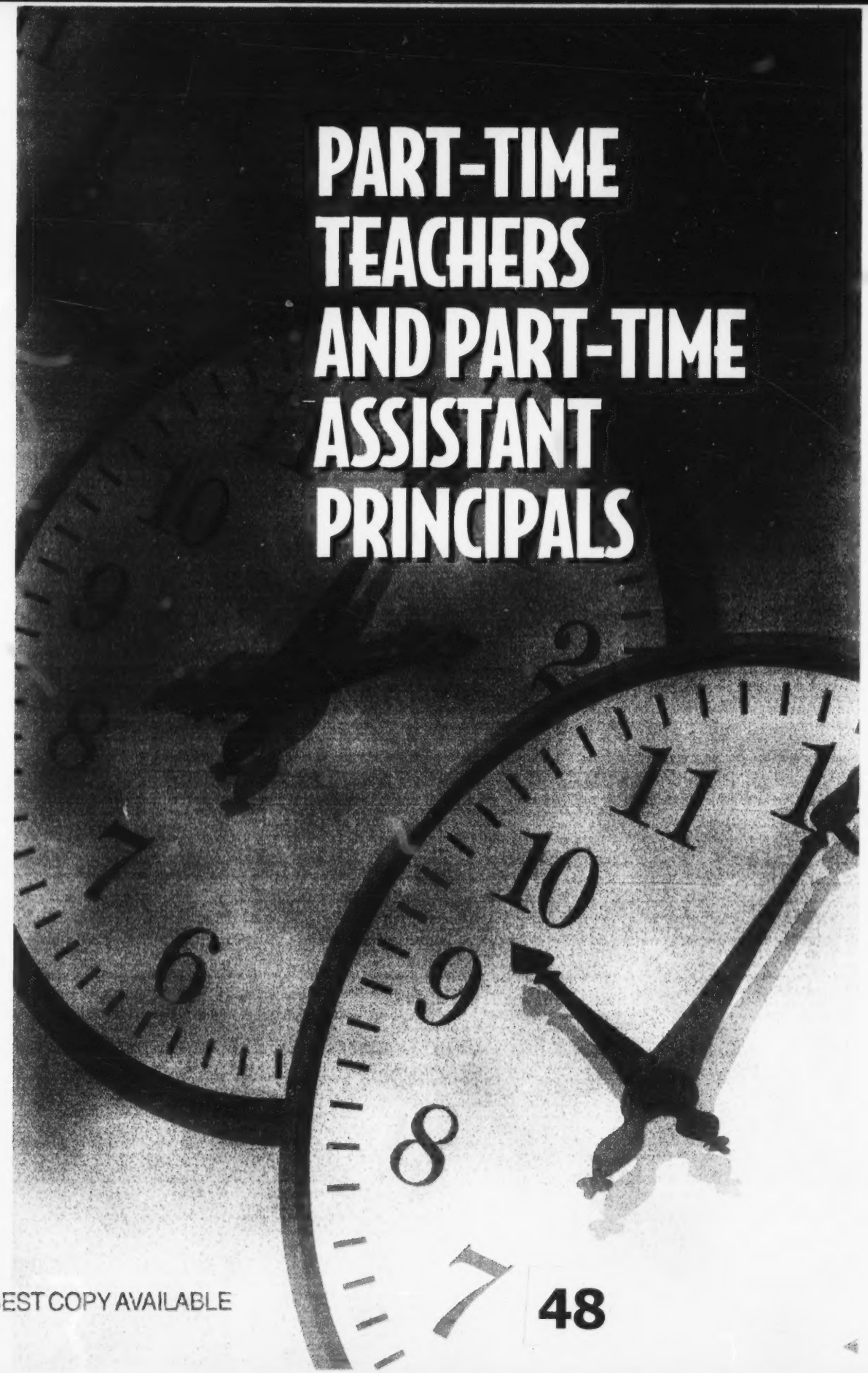
sure of the first graders reading to me or a student showing me an improved grade. My time to teach comes when supervising at lunch and recess, when a teacher sends a child to my office or when I'm in the detention area after school. At these times, I have an opportunity to teach discipline and personal responsibility. I may resolve a fight, convince a child that homework is important or talk about teasing. These occasions often involve smiles and tears, discussions with teachers, parental input with an emphasis on their role as primary educator, and patience. It is always nice to end with a sign that peace has been made.

At the end of the day, I have either detention or dismissal duty. In detention, students are asked what they would do differently and how they think Jesus would have acted. Dismissal duty requires walkie talkies and blow horns. Both are interesting ways to end the day. With the students gone, there is time for reflection and for planning the next day. Upon reflection, I give thanks for counseling skills, organization and teamwork. Most of all, I thank the Lord for another day with His children.

PART-TIME TEACHERS AND PART-TIME ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS



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GAIL McHUGH
ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST SCHOOL, MILPITAS, CALIFORNIA

My school day begins with Mass at 7:15 a.m. where I beg, plead and barter with the Good Lord to guide me through the events of the day with an element of proficiency. That done, it is time for a pre-school briefing with the principal over coffee and bagels. Before I know it, the 8:15 a.m. bell is ringing and we are off: flag salute, morning prayer and march to the classrooms. It is now 8:25 a.m., so I go back to my office where I tackle the tasks listed below.

- Review and follow up on SAT test results.
- Work with the local public school district regarding special services.
- Assist teachers in the classroom with special programs and mentoring new teachers.
- Type and/or revise schedules for PE, music and yard duty.
- Review all textbooks and materials orders to ensure the teachers receive all the supplies ordered and needed.
- Update WASC progress report, an on-going task.
- Review and revise the emergency plans for fire and earthquake.
- Inventory and update all supplies and all playground and classroom equipment.
- Most importantly, respond to whatever else the principal needs at any given moment.

Before I know it, it is 9:00 a.m. and time for me to switch to my junior high math teacher hat. During class, I wonder silently if it is recess time yet, as I need some caffeine! Relief comes at 10:00 a.m. when I have a whole 15 minutes to see what is stirring in the faculty lounge. Sometimes I even get to sit down and rest a spell before heading back to two more math periods. And so the morning ends.

Lunch supervision and yard duty come next. I pray to God that the troops will be tranquil and cooperative. My stomach is growling and I hope 12:40 p.m. arrives before I get cranky from lack of nourishment. Soon all lunch trash is stashed away, all conflicts resolved and detention slips served and I can seek the solace of the faculty lounge for a half-hour. "Relax, Gail," I tell myself, "there's only an hour and thirty minutes left."

For the last ninety minutes of the school day I go back to my office and revisit the projects listed above that I first tackled in the morning. I am on a roll and hoping that the principal doesn't throw a wrench into the path of serious progress. I also hope she doesn't run off to a diocesan meeting leaving me holding the fort! Such an event would mean my being landed with the whole deal—phone calls, discipline sessions and more.

At 2:55 p.m. I ask myself, "Who's doing dismissal?" Silently I think that the principal is here so it can't be me. A bell rings to tell me that it is 3:00 p.m. and the little children are departing. I let out a sigh. Another school day has ended at St. John's. "Can I leave now?" I ask myself. "No, not yet," I answer myself. There are some minor details to clean up before I can leave. If it is Tuesday or Thursday, I have math tutoring to do in the 6th grade classroom until 4:00 p.m. On the other three days of the week, I spend from 3:00 to 4:00 catching up on grading papers, assessments or preparing math materials for the next day. Whatever work that doesn't get done goes in my briefcase for homework.

So another day in the life of this assistant principal winds down around 5:00 p.m. and I head home to "All My Children" (my only vice, taped in my absence), my pet cat, my wonderful husband and the quiet of the evening. A hectic life, yes, but I wouldn't have it any other way.

Assistant-Principal Job Description

The professional assistant principal assists the principal in the administration of the school, stands in when the principal is absent, and assumes responsibility for the following tasks:

1. Make administrative decisions in the principal's absence.
2. Communicate daily with the principal and act as liaison between the staff and the principal.
3. Assist with administrative decisions regarding school policy and parent-teacher-student relationships.
4. Assist with preparing the agenda for faculty meetings; oversee the completion and distribution of the minutes of all meetings.
5. Collect and distribute all materials and forms with specific due dates.
6. Assist the principal with the evaluation and interview process for new teachers.
7. Attend the monthly PTG board meetings; represent the principal at school board meetings when necessary.
8. Check the attendance registers quarterly and in each trimester.
9. Assist in the revision of the parent/student handbook and the faculty handbook in collaboration with the principal and other staff.
10. Attend a minimum of one administrative workshop or course a year.
11. Schedule the following:
    - Faculty yard duty (list of personnel and their assignments). Hand out *Yard Duty Procedures and Regulations* and schedule a training session.
    - Recess/lunch duty for regular day and early day dismissals.
    - Music and Physical Education classes.
    - Library time.
    - Computer Lab time.
    - Faculty job responsibility list.
12. Assist the principal in monitoring progress toward the school's goals that have been set by the faculty and staff.
13. Monitor the progress of the safety patrol, checking that the general policies and list of students serving on the pa-

trol have been typed out.

14. Coordinate Title I, ESEA Services for Private School Children by collecting lists of qualifying students from the faculty, contacting Milpitas Unified School District, and making arrangements for services for our students.
15. Coordinate Title VI that provides state funding for school materials in conjunction with the school district and faculty/staff, and ordering school materials using the state funds specified.
16. Order textbooks as needed for the following school year.
17. Coordinate SAT testing by ordering, distributing and collecting test materials for the faculty. When testing is complete, pack and return materials. Distribute scores to faculty when received, prepare results for the Title 1 program, check CUM files to ensure the results are attached to the front of the student's files and the score sheet placed inside the file.
18. Coordinate emergency preparedness making sure all emergency policies are in place. These include:
    - see that emergency binders are up-to-date; instruct faculty/staff on each person's specific role and responsibilities in an emergency.
    - check that each room has the Emergency Evacuation Map and Policies properly placed on the wall.
    - check that each room has an up-to-date emergency backpack.
    - conduct schoolwide fire and earthquake drills.
19. Distribute and collect year-end forms that the faculty completes.
20. Coordinate the WASC school accreditation process and type the annual report to be submitted to the diocese.

SUZANNE RICH
DIOCESE OF SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

This past summer I went to the leadership program conducted by Jim Brennan in San Jose and was encouraged to attend the Academy. Although I am not working as an assistant principal at this time, the comments below refer to the assistant principal at our school.

Jane, the assistant principal at our school, wears many hats. In addition to being assistant principal, she is the religion coordinator and moderator for the Student Council. Jane teaches religion to the third grade since their regular teacher is not Catholic. Jane also takes the new teachers under her wing and helps them through their first year.

This year, Jane was responsible for organizing a short prayer service to take place during our first faculty meeting. The service was originally planned for 10:15 a.m., following a short break, but when Jane arrived at school that day she learned the service had been rescheduled for 9:00 a.m. An assistant principal needs to be flexible. Later that same day, Jane could be seen blowing up color-coded balls and sorting playground equipment for the different classes. An assistant principal needs to be multi-skilled and versatile.

On the first day of school, Jane arrived a bit frazzled and with only two minutes to spare. An assistant principal must be on time and available. The first two days of school passed successfully with no major catastrophes. However, at the end of the second day, the sixth-grade teacher was offered another job that would enable him to be closer to his ailing parent. He

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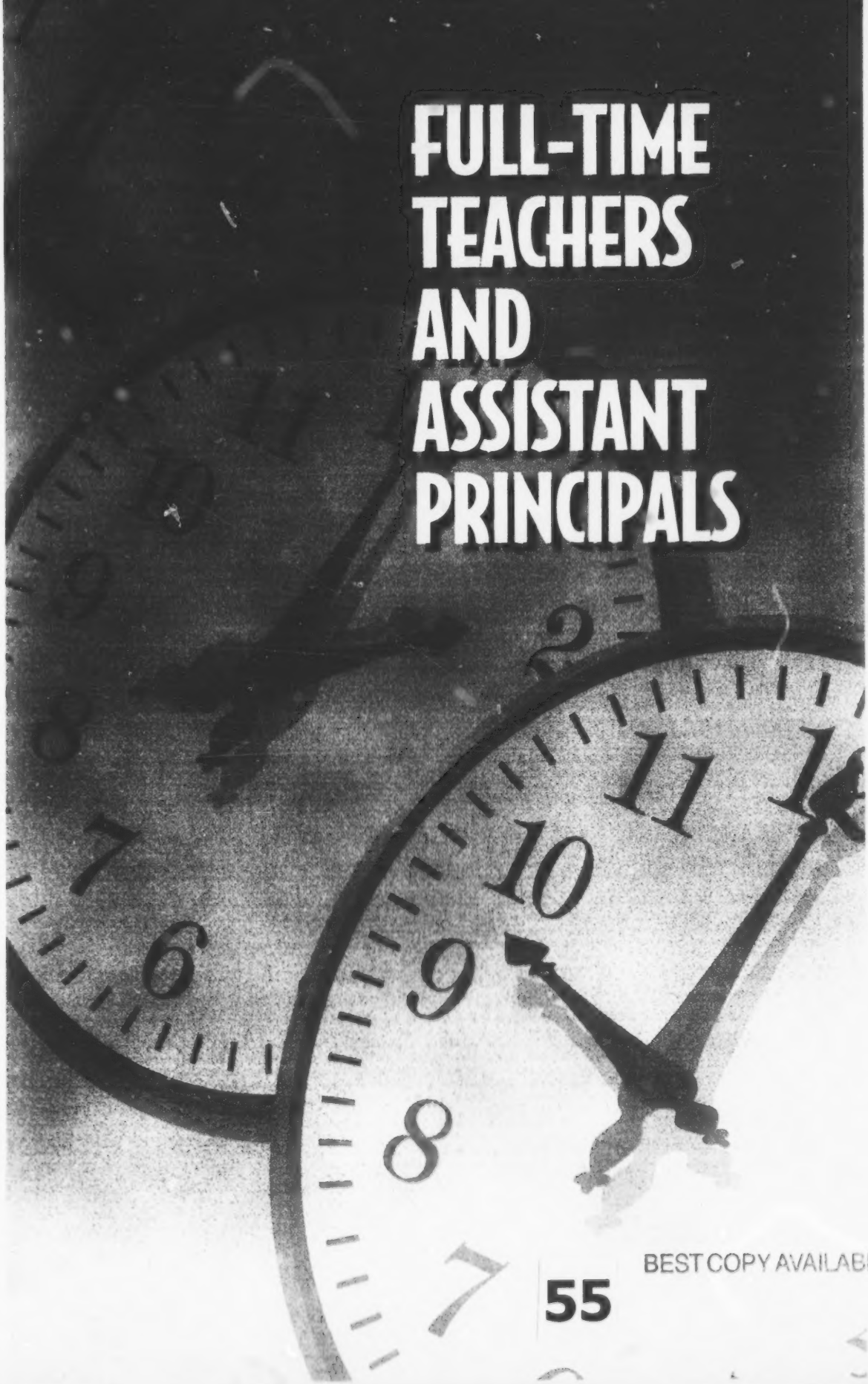
told our principal that he would not be back the next day. God was with us, needless to say, and we managed to reshuffle the entire junior high schedule with the help of post-it notes and the generosity of all the teachers involved. As a result of the reshuffle, Jane is now teaching sixth-grade religion, as well as continuing to teach the third-grade religion class.

The above description of the first few days of this school year are not typical, but then are there ever any typical days?

In addition to the duties mentioned above, Jane is also responsible for:

- ordering textbooks
- informing teachers of money available through state funding programs
- schoolwide prayer services
- coordinating the Advent-Christmas program assisted by the rest of the staff
- graduation and awards ceremonies
- attending staff meetings with the principal



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MAGGIE DEE
ST. PATRICK SCHOOL, TAMPA, FLORIDA

As an assistant principal, I never know what the day has in store for me. Our school is not yet large enough to qualify for a full-time assistant principal, so I also teach full-time which makes the challenges even greater. There is an expectation that I can somehow, magically, be everywhere at the same time. After a particularly crazy day, I feel as though I am in a washing machine stuck on the spin cycle. This is especially true on a day when the principal is away.

My day begins in the school office at 6:45 a.m., when things are still quiet. I make sure that all the bases are covered in the event I get called out of my classroom. At 7:30 a.m., I am on parking lot duty alone until other on-duty teachers join me at 7:45 a.m. The bell rings at 8:00 a.m. and this is my first opportunity to see if I can "bi-locate," as I need to go to the office and my classroom at the exact same time. Fortunately, I have a great working relationship with the seventh-grade teacher who will take both 7th and 8th grades for homeroom, allowing me to head to the office and touch base with the secretary.

I go to my classroom hoping I will not see the secretary at my door or hear her voice over the intercom, but I will. There are always going to be interruptions, some simple and some serious. The simple ones can be handled in the classroom, like the time a first grader set off the fire alarm. This student is now in 9th grade, but right up to graduation last spring she remembered her trip to my classroom as a first grader. The weather

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can present problems. It has become a joke between the principal and me that every time he is away it is raining by lunchtime. Then I am left to decide if we should eliminate free play after lunch, making me the least popular person in the school when that is the case. That decision leads to deciding if we will have a rainy day dismissal and should we cancel practice. Living as we do in the lightening capital of America, these decisions are sometimes critical. Somehow, though, it all works out and we survive.

Switching gears all day long is hard—all teachers know that. I begin to really feel I am in the spin cycle when I have to deal with the more serious issues. Shifting to a serious situation requires real concentration; therefore, I have taught myself not to worry about the students in my classroom at these times. They may not have enough to do but they are usually with the secretary or the seventh grade teacher. One of the first things we explain to the seventh-grade teacher is that occasionally covering my class will be a part of his/her job and that I need to be free to focus on the problem for however long it takes. This is a challenge for both of us.

At 3:15, I take a deep breath, say goodbye to the last couple of children and thank God that we succeeded in having a good day with everyone leaving safely. If I am on deck for the next day, I check with the secretary to see what is on tomorrow's agenda, climb back up the stairs one more time and pack up to go home. For the moment, the spin cycle is over, even though I know it will start up again the next morning.

FRANCES L. MICHALEC
ST. MATTHEW SCHOOL, GAHANNA, OHIO

I am a full-time kindergarten teacher with 43 students in two half-day programs (23 in the morning session and 20 in the afternoon). I am also the assistant to the principal. The word "to" is important because my responsibilities in this position are secondary to my daily teaching. Rather than routine assignments, my duties as assistant to the principal are to help lighten her load on an as-needed basis.

One of my primary duties is to attend all school board meetings and home and school meetings; several occasions I have represented the principal at these meetings. I am a member of the principal's advisory committee that helps with specific learning, discipline and protocol issues. Three times a year, I will help organize a faculty and staff breakfast. I have worked on mundane items, such as a make-up policy, as well as lofty issues, such as helping with the school mission statement. One disappointment I experienced was when I had organized an after-school foreign language program only to have the new teacher decide at the last minute not to teach the course.

The following are some of the special activities that I have had to organize. I was assigned to improve the traffic flow at dismissal time. For this, I worked with the local police chief to plan a new, safer method for moving the buses and the parents' cars through the parking lot. I started a program in which experienced St. Matthew's parents will mentor parents who are new to the school. I organized a day and evening presentation to the school by Mr. Steven Newman, the Worldwalker.

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This was an activity I thoroughly enjoyed and it was an honor to meet Mr. Newman.

As a Catholic educator, I enjoy organizing special prayer services. One was an advent service to which we invited the student body by having carols sung in the school, led by the kindergarten students. This was a lovely event. Another special service was the culminating activity of a Tolerance Program involving students and teachers in a peace para-liturgy honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Public relations is an important vehicle through which we can celebrate our religion and our school and keep our alumni involved in the school's activities. The other kindergarten teacher and I organized a "Nazareth Day" program in which the children did daily activities such as Jesus might have done as a child in Nazareth. For several hands-on activities, we enlisted the help of St. Mathew alumni who are now high school students and it was great for me to see some of my former students. This program was written up in the diocesan newspaper.

One of the more complex activities I organized was a surprise celebration to honor our principal upon completion of the school expansion that doubled the size of grades K through eight. The celebration was held during our regularly-scheduled open house meeting at the beginning of the school year and was attended by the pastor, the mayor, three representatives from the diocesan office and the local press. The program presented a chronology of the school's growth with the faculty and staff playing an integral part in the telling of the story. This was a great celebration for all of us.

This description of my job would not be complete without relating one of the most stressful situations I have had to deal with on a day when the principal was absent. One morning several police officers came to the school to announce that an armed robber was believed to be hiding in the woods adjacent to the school. All of us–children, teachers and staff–were locked in the building for two hours. When the threat ended in a peaceful way, the television people arrived to interview the children! "I don't think so," I said firmly and asked them to leave.

JUDY ROSENDIN
ST. ANTHONY'S SCHOOL, MANTECA, CALIFORNIA

As the assistant principal of St. Anthony's, I operate mainly from behind the scenes, although I am "on call" when the principal is not on campus. Since I also teach the fourth grade full-time, much of my day is spent in the classroom. Most emergencies that arise during the school day come from the office that is close to my classroom and occasionally I have to leave my class to attend to an urgent matter. However, most of the time my assistant principal responsibilities can be carried out before or after school.

My responsibilities include heading up our technology program and computer lab, arranging assemblies and working on the Title program through our local school district. During the year, I am responsible for coordinating various prayer services and for the school's testing program. I will assist the principal in coordinating a variety of school activities.

I mentor new staff and serve as a sounding board for any staff member who needs to talk with someone. I help to deal with difficult situations involving students and parents, as well as conducting a "temperature check" of the feelings and concerns among faculty and staff. Occasionally I will attend meetings in the principal's absence. I have also done some grant applications and staff development workshops.

In the coming year, I am looking forward to having help in my classroom three afternoons a week. This will enable me to be of greater assistance to our principal and be more accessible to the school office. The position of assistant principal is

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a rewarding and interesting one–the unexpected does happen and no days are routine.

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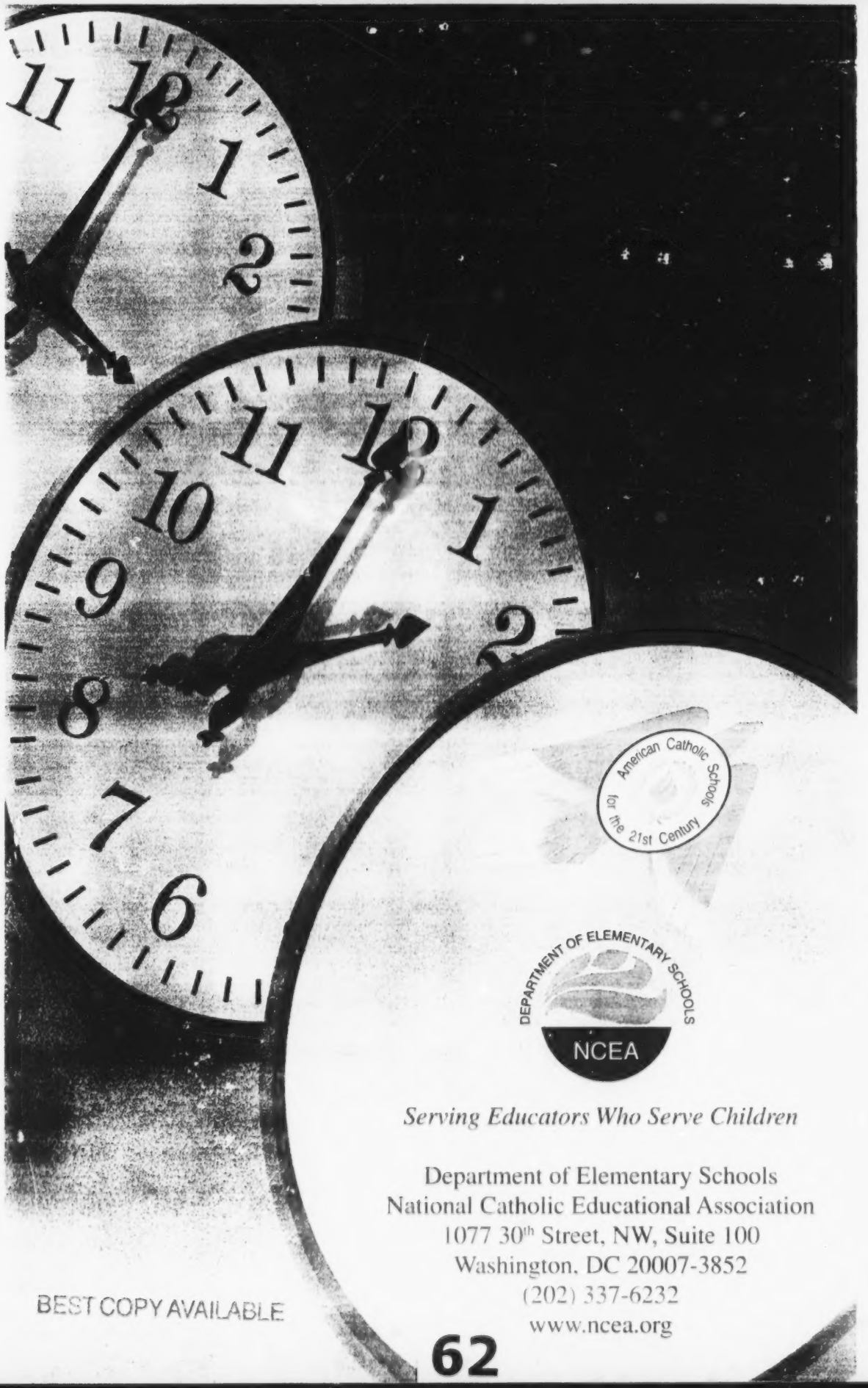

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